

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

There are three main theoretical areas that inform the present study. These are Critical Discourse Analysis, the poststructuralist theorising of identity, and advertising. First, I use Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze visual images and to make explicit the ideologies and identities that are implicit in the texts. Secondly, I use a post-structuralist theory of identity for understanding youth interpretations of the same set of print advertisements. Advertising is important because it is a branch of media discourse that provides the print advertisements for analysis. This chapter discusses theories and reviews previous studies that relate to the three theoretical disciplines. All of this is conducted through the lense of a language in education perspective of teaching youth popular culture in high schools.

### **2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is concerned with the relationship between discourse and society (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In CDA, language is viewed as a social practice; that is, language is constituted by society and it constitutes society (Fairclough, 1995: 54-55). Fairclough proposes that central to CDA are issues of power and language, and identity and language, among other things. Thomas (2004) states that CDA is concerned with how a particular account of events becomes the decisive public version, or definition, of the situation, that is, it focuses on how such a definition generates meaning through particular representations, identities and power relations within discourses, 'it seeks an understanding of how ideology is expressed through discursive forms' (Thomas, 2004:55). Van Dijk (2001:96) writes that CDA is a 'critical perspective on doing scholarship: it is so to speak, discourse analysis with an attitude'.

There are various models of CDA that are useful as a research tool. For example, Van Dijk (2001) advances a theoretical discourse-cognition-society triangle. The author defines the three concepts: ‘discourse’, ‘cognition’ and ‘society’ in the following way; Firstly, discourse means any text whether visual or verbal. Secondly, cognition involves both personal and social cognition, beliefs and goals, evaluations, emotions, and any mental or memory representations involved in discourse and interaction. Lastly, society includes both the local, microstructures of situated face-to-face interactions, as well as the more global, social and political structures variously defined in terms of groups, group-relations (such as dominance and inequality), movements, institutions, organisations, social processes, political systems and more abstract properties of societies and cultures. These three concepts describes the text-context relationships that are a nexus of analysis in CDA (Van Dijk, 2001: 96-99).

CDA looks at the discursive constructions that are found in texts in relation to their contexts. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) assert that as critical discourse analysts we assume a dialectical relationship between particular discursive practices and the specific fields of action (situations, institutional frames, and social structures) in which they are embedded. In my analysis of the advertisements as visual texts, I am going to apply a CDA approach that is informed by social semiotics (e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

### **2.1.1 Social semiotics**

Jewitt and Oyama (2001:134) state that social semiotics<sup>1</sup> involves the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication). The term ‘resources’ is important because it qualifies any symbol, sign, letter, or logo as something that is potentially meaningful. In Halliday’s theory of language as social semiotic (e.g. 1985) language is seen ‘as a mode of representation which constructs social realities, social identities and social relations as well as being constructed by them’ (Kamler, 2001:25). In line with CDA, social semiotics views

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<sup>1</sup> A full discussion of the social semiotic tools of analysis that are going to be used in this study alongside the analysis of the advertisements is found in Chapter Four.

language as a social practice. The three metafunctions of language that were proposed by Halliday (1985) encapsulate the ‘meaning potential’ of language. These are the experiential, the textual and the interpersonal metafunctions. Halliday’s (1985) main focus was on verbal language. The use of social semiotics in reading images has been proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), among others. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) model of analyzing images is based on Halliday’s grammar. The authors show that reading images and reading the linguistic text is similar because they are both representations of social identities, social realities and social relations.

In this research, social semiotics is being drawn upon because it offers a systematic way of analyzing multimodal texts. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) define multimodal texts as texts that use more than one mode in order to communicate messages. Print advertisements are multimodal because they consist of verbal and visual signs.

### **2.1.2 Relevance of CDA in the present study**

Since CDA is both a theory and a method (Fairclough, 2001:121), a methodological question arising from CDA is: Which discourse structures should be analysed? Van Dijk (2001:99) argues that we must make choices, and select those structures, for closer analysis, that are relevant for the study of a social issue. He claims that this requires at least some informal ideas about text-context links that tell us which properties of discourse may vary as a function of which social structures. This is also shaped by the research questions that one asks. This study will select those features of the discourse of the advertisements that are prominent in the discursive construction of youth identities. In order to explore identities that are constructed in the advertisements, one needs to define identity.

## 2.2 Identity

‘Identity’ is a term that is prominent in social scientific research and the humanities. For example, the concept of identity is discussed in writing pedagogy, psychology, marketing, cultural studies, anthropology, sociolinguistics, various forms of art, literature, discourse studies and so on. The term ‘identity’ has numerous meanings. The aforementioned disciplines attach nuanced meanings to the term.

Identity is loosely translated to what we are as human beings. Van Dijk (1998:118) argues that identity is both a personal and social construct; that is, mental representation. He claims that in their representations of ‘the self’, people construct themselves as being members of several categories and groups, (e.g. women, ethnic minorities, US citizens, journalists, environmentalists, etc). Van Dijk (1998) distinguishes between personal and group identity. The former refers to personal mental representations and experiences. The latter refers to mental representations of (social) self as a collection of group memberships.

Social identity is defined in terms of social representations. However, this may extend further than the mental to include actual activities and symbols that are used by the group for identification purposes. Van Dijk (1998:123) claims that group identity does not seem to be limited to shared mental representations, but involves a complex array of typical or routine practices, collective action, dress, objects, settings, heroes and other symbols. Van Dijk (1998) also sees identity as the social practices, symbols, settings or forms of organization that are typical for a group and with which members identify; also important is their meaning or interpretation for the group.

Hall (1992) distinguishes between three different conceptions of identity: those of the Enlightenment subject, sociological subject and post modern subject. The Enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose ‘centre’ consisted of an inner core, which first emerged when the subject was born, and

unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same - continuous or 'identical' with itself – throughout the individual's existence. The essential centre of the self was a person's identity. This is also referred to as the essentialist subject.

Hall states that the idea of the sociological subject reflected the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was formed in relation to 'significant others', who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols -the culture- of the worlds he/she inhabited. According to this view, which has become the classic sociological conception, identity is formed in the 'interaction' between self and society. According to this concept, the subject still has an inner core or essence that is 'the real me', but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities that they offer.

The post-modern/ post-structuralist conception of identity characterizes the subject as fragmented, and composed of several sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities. According to Hall:

The very process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable and problematic...as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily (Hall, 1992: 275-277).

This plurality and fluidity in conceptualizing identity is in line with the anti-essentialist approach to identity (Hall, 1992). This latter understanding of identity informs the present study. I also draw heavily on the fact that identity is implicated in discourses or representations. These are both media representations and the interpretations of those representations by individuals. Hall (1992: 301) argues that identity is deeply implicated in representation:

Thus, the shaping and reshaping of time-space relationships within different systems of representation have profound effects on how identities are located and represented.

Advertisements are a source of representations of identities, and the interpretation of advertisements shows a complex process, which has to do with who people are, how they see themselves, how others see them and what they would like to become (Hall 1996). According to Hall (1996), identity is about what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Hall's understanding of identity lies in 'representation' and in the processes of change and 'becoming' that individuals or people make or appropriate for themselves.

This study looks at the role of discourse in constructing identity both in and through advertisements. Jaworski and Coupland (1999:408) argue that more recent sociological work expresses that we have to deal with a multiplicity of personal and social identities in discourse. This view proposes that different discourses make available different subject positions. The idea that discursive constructions provide different identity constructions is a post-structuralist theorization of identity (Hall, 1992). McKinney (2003) argues that the central role of the discursive in constructing meaning means that examining the language people use gives useful insights into their subjectivities or identities.

In line with Hall's (1992, 1996) explanation of post-modernist identity, Giddens (1999) sees identity as a process, a series of choices one continually makes about one's lifestyle and as emerging from one's relationships with others. Giddens (1999) also claims that the sites for different identities are to be found in interaction between the self and the contexts in which he/she operates, whether we think of these contexts as other human agents, mediated communication, or more abstract notions such as ideologies. In all these processes discourse can be seen as constitutive of identities, social relations, and categories and other aspects of people's social lives.

Giddens (1999) is interested in characterising 'the self' in late modernity. He describes four processes that are happening to people in post-modern societies. He labels these processes 'tribulations of the self'. These processes are unification versus fragmentation, powerlessness versus appropriation, authority versus uncertainty, and personalized versus commodified experience. Of relevance to this study in Giddens's (1999:424) 'tribulations of the self' is that advertisers orient themselves to sociological classifications of consumer categories and at the same time foster specific consumption 'packages'. Advertisers do what they call 'market segmentation', in terms of which consumers are divided according to various social profiles, such as age, religion, race, lifestyle and so on. According to Giddens (1999), in some ways, the project of the self becomes translated into one of the possession of desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life.

A post-structuralist approach to identity also reveals that identity is a complex phenomenon which is not fixed and unitary (Hall, 1992, 1996). Bean and Moni (2003) review recent studies related to teaching literature and adolescent identity construction. The authors use a critical literacy stance to engage students in a discussion of young adult literature from Australia and America. They offer a framework that teachers can use to initiate discussions on the basis of literacy in their own classrooms. They argue that identity in a shopping mall culture is constructed through consumption of goods, with selfhood vested in things. Dawson (2003) argues that anti-essentialist frameworks suggest that context is a crucial consideration in theorising about identity. For example, in a school context the students assume a different identity from the one they take on in a shopping mall context.

One of Bean and Moni's (2003) research questions, which corroborates the present research, is: given these post-modern fluid conditions, how do contemporary teens construct their identities? In this study, I intend to theorize about the way identity and the perception of popular culture and mass media are related (Overland, 2003). The locus of identity in this research is advertising texts and young people's talk.

### **2.2.1 A historical overview of youth identities and youth culture in South Africa**

In South Africa, youth culture is diverse and complex. Its parent culture is said to be that of the apartheid era, which was epitomized in revolutionary endeavours like the youth uprising of 16 June 1976 and the township styles of Pantsula dance (Bogatsu, 2002). However, the present youth seems to be less political. In describing the present youth, Bogatsu (2002) writes that it manifests itself in different locales, such as townships, suburbs and rural areas. It has resulted in some common names such as ‘oreos’, ‘coconuts’, [bana ba di model C’s] ‘Children from Model C’<sup>2</sup> ‘amagents’ and so on. Bogatsu writes that this youth generation and its ideals are evident in most contemporary popular cultural media, mainly music, television and fashion, in her description of ‘Loxion kulcha’ brand for black youth in post apartheid South Africa.

Most of the studies that have been done on youth identity in South Africa are based on racial identities (e.g. Dawson, 2003; Dolby, 1999; Soudien, 2001). Dolby (1999) is interested in how youths at racially mixed Fernwood High School in Durban engage with and use global popular culture, specifically music, as a critical site for the formation and deployment of racial identities within the school. For example, there is a conflict between white and black students over which music to play in a fashion show to be staged by the school, nearly causing a strike. The white students insist that the music be exclusively techno music, whereas most of the black students are content with a mix of techno, pop, rap and children’s songs.

Dolby argues that:

The white students here cling to the styles and tastes of global whiteness, to consolidate an identity about which they feel and express passionate attachments (Dolby, 1999: 298).

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<sup>2</sup> Ex Model C are previously white urban government schools that are thought to offer a higher quality education in South Africa. They usually enrol students from upper class and middle class backgrounds.



In a later study Dolby (2000) argues that labels and music were defining in separating white, black and coloured learners at the high school in KwaZulu Natal where she conducted her research. Underscoring the importance of labels among learners at this school, Zola, an African girl, explains that Africans (blacks) are in favour of particular labels:

But when you are black [African], you are wearing R50 jeans, people are going to say, mmm, that's ugly. We are looking for labels and names. We just look for the label and the label counts and it costs as well, (Dolby, 2000: 13-14).

In a Johannesburg based study, Dawson (2003) investigates identity formation through the eyes of learners at a South African high school (which Dawson named X). Among her findings, is the observation that fashion, music, physical appearance and friends are central concerns of most teenagers. In addition, brands emerge as an important indicator of youth identity for some learners. Similarly, music preference is often linked to race. Learners tend to infer a person's 'race' from the clothes they wear and music they listen to (Dawson, 2003). For example, preference for labels such as *Levi's* and *All Stars* is associated with being coloured, while dressing in smart, expensive European labels, such as *Giorgio Armani* is considered to be characteristic of African learners.

In this study, youth culture is related to popular culture. Hall (1994) states that popular culture refers to the things that masses of people listen to, buy, read, consume and seem to enjoy. Hebdige (1988:30) states that, since the mid-1960s, youth culture has become largely a matter of commodity selection, of emphatically stated taste preferences and that 'image serves for the members of the groups themselves as a means of marking boundaries, of articulating identity and difference' (Hebdige, 1988:30). The study of popular culture is important because, as Dolby (1999:305) argues, it is necessary for an understanding of the workings of ordinary life and the enduring dynamics of race and class. Since the discussion has been about the role of brands in youth identities performed in schools, I now describe the broad field of advertising.

## 2.3 Advertising

Advertisements (sometimes referred to as adverts in this study) are understood as ‘the everyday texts’ that persuade people to buy certain products or inform their target audience about some aspect of reality, such as a general meeting, or political elections. Dyer (1982:2) states that advertising means ‘drawing attention to something’, or notifying or informing somebody of something. In order to understand the purpose of advertisements, one has to treat advertisements as a discourse type. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001:4) define discourses as socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality, developing in specific social contexts and in ways that are appropriate to the interests of social actors.

Advertising involves three major stakeholders. These are the manufacturers, consumers and advertising agencies. Cook (1992) classifies the manufacturers as senders, the consumers as addressees and the advertisers as senders. The mass media are the channel through which advertisements reach the consumer. The mass media consists of commercial television, radio, newspapers, and magazines among other things. The medium has to be suitable to the advertising agency in terms of presenting the advertisements to the desired audience. Sandage et al. (1983: 143) assert that advertisers examine the coverage each medium has in various markets and select those media that cover the target areas most effectively.

Advertising is widely researched in the economic and management sciences, marketing communications, visual communications, and language and literacy education. Modern-day advertisements influence the social lives of people in many developed societies. Advertisements pervade every social space, from the billboard, the streets, the shopping malls, to our homes, through television, magazines and newspapers; we are bombarded by images of advertisements. Advertisements encourage people to buy certain products or goods (Banard, 1995:33; Goatly, 2000; Dyer, 1982).

### **2.3.1 The discourse of advertising**

The discourse of advertising consists of the copy, the image, the logo and the headline (Cronje et al. 2004). For the purpose of this study, I will analyze the salient discourse features of my chosen texts. These include the image and the verbal text because of the various elements found in the design of advertising, advertisements are referred to as multimodal texts, as has been mentioned above (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). The use of images with the verbal text affords complex relationships between the words and the pictures for multimodal research to explore. Often the verbal text anchors the image. Of concern here is that images without a verbal text are open to numerous interpretations, but if they occur with the verbal text, as they often do in advertising, the divergence in interpretation is minimized. However, Messaries (1997: 221) suggests that an advertisement's visual message can remain partly or wholly implicit even when there is extensive verbal commentary ostensibly telling us how to interpret the images.

Various techniques of appeal are found in advertisements. Firstly, as Messaries (1997) claims, by linking a product with a certain image, the advertisement makes it possible for users of the product to draw on that link as a means of making a public statement about how they themselves wish to be viewed. For example, for a person aspiring toward upward mobility, ordering a brand of vodka whose advertising includes original works of art may be a way of signalling good taste and refinement. Secondly, as Williamson (1978) claims, advertisements usually position viewers to participate in an interpretative process on the basis of 'false assumptions', positioning viewers to presume a line of equivalence between the product and the glamourized traits of the model. Thirdly, as Goldman (1992) asserts, advertisements tend to invite us to step into the 'space' of the advertisement to try on the social self we might become if we wore the product image. 'People become a kind of tabula rasa, a slate filled with desired attributes by the objects they consume' (Goldman, 1992: 24). This echoes what was argued by Berger (1972) in his now classic study of advertising called 'Ways of Seeing'. Berger (1972:131) states that advertisements propose to each of us that we transform ourselves, or our lives, by buying something more. He observes that the would-be buyer is meant to envy him or

herself as he or she will become if he or she buys the product. This shows that buyers may imagine certain futures (identities) that are promised in the product purchase.

### **2.3.2 Audience studies and interpretation of adverts**

Audience studies have been conducted under five traditions. These are effects research, uses and gratification research, literary criticism, cultural studies, and reception analysis (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). According to Jensen and Rosengren (1990), reception analysis has one of its roots in the two traditions of reception aesthetics; these are, reader response, which falls under literary criticism, and uses and gratification research, which is used in media studies. The aim of reception analysis, according to Jensen and Rosengren is to examine the processes of reception that have a bearing on the use and impact of media content and how specific audiences differ in the social production of meaning.

Although this research borrows from several of the approaches used in audience studies, its central approach comes from the reception analysis tradition. Reception analysis is concerned with how audiences of the mass media receive, perceive, or interpret mediated messages. Advertisers send messages to the audience, which lead to certain interpretations from the audience. Overland (2003) states that reception analysis represents a useful tool, as it allows the visibility of multiple voices and knowledge of multiple cultural codes. This helps in broadening the interpretations of advertisements by the researcher through giving a second perspective on the analysis of media texts.

The interpretation of advertisements is a complex process, akin to interpreting any text. Texts, as Thomas (2004) argues, are polysemic. This means that there can be multiple readings of any given text. Critical readers of texts normally refer to the dominant or preferred reading of a text, the alternative or negotiated reading and the resistant reading of the text. The dominant reading of the text is usually in line with the aims of the sender of the message, whereas the resistant reading is more of an oppositional stance taken towards the texts by readers. It is a kind of disagreement. The negotiated reading lies somewhere in the middle of the two extremes (Thomas, 2004: 54).

Research done among audiences has often been conducted through examining how individuals receive advertisements. Ritson and Elliot (1999) sought to depart from this tradition by investigating how advertisements are used in social interactions of high school going students in England. Through conducting an ethnographic study of young people's social uses of advertising in their everyday talk, they unravelled a series of socially related advertising audience behaviours. For instance:

These (social) interactions varied from the simple mimicking of a jingle or catchphrase for a few brief seconds to extended conversations about a particular advertising execution (Ritson & Elliot 1999:265).

However, while this research focussed on how advertisements influence the conversational habits of sixth formers (Sixth formers are learners who are doing their first year of A level's in the UK), the present study looks at the interpretation of advertisements by Grade eleven learners in South Africa.

### **2.3.3 Identity in advertising: a review of related literature**

Like other popular culture texts, advertisements are a site for the construction of youth identity. As a result, identity is discussed in research done into marketing and commodity consumption. Hattori (1997) claims that consumers borrow identities associated with commodities in the expression of their self-identities. Referring to the brand, the author writes, as a symbol, it is expected to represent the identity of a product, of an organization and a personality. Williams (2004:51) defines a brand as a known and trusted bundle of emotional and physical attributes that appeal to consumers' minds and hearts. For example, the South African beer brand *Castle Lager* is referred to as a 'friendship brew'; some of its advertisements depict scenes of men in a jolly mood watching soccer.

Brand identity expresses attributes or qualities and values of the product and its consumers. These attributes of the brand are supposedly associated with its consumers

(Williams, 2004). Hattori (1997) outlines the process in the following way: by identifying 'brand personalities', marketers can specify the target markets and in this way reaching the intended consumers becomes easier. Consumers, on the other hand, can create an association between their lifestyles and the identities of brands more easily because the identities of brands are designed so meticulously that consumers feel as if brands are there to satisfy their individual tastes. Britten (1999) claims that a common research question often directed at consumers is, "If this brand was a person, what would it say to you?"

To reiterate, with the development of consumer society, one of the ways in which people construct individual identities is through the symbolic identities represented by brands. Talbot (1992: 175) writes that modern advertising offers potential consumers memberships of imaginary communities based on consumption, as much as on offering actual commodities for consumption. Brand identity is being studied in conjunction with youth audience in this research.

Some studies of identity in adverts are based on gender identity. Previous studies, such as those of Goffman (1979), Waters and Ellis (1996) and a recent South African study by Overland (2003), seek to critique gender representations in advertisements. Often, the arguments are centred around gender-role stereotypes and sexuality in advertisements. While the former two studies are primarily based on textual analysis, the latter employs audience research and perception analysis conducted on the basis of focus groups organized by the Women's Media Watch, a Cape Town media-monitoring organization, during the second half of 2001. Overland (2003) also employs an interpretative textual analysis in order to produce further data on the basis of popular magazines: *You*, *Drum* and *Huisgenoot* from October 2002. The social profile of the audience researched by Overland was diverse in terms of race, class, gender, occupation, geographical location and educational background. In Overland's study, the audience responses revealed that the depiction of beauty in the magazines had a significant effect on the way they viewed themselves as men and women, and that gender stereotypes were rampant, as all

participants pointed out that they rarely saw men's bodies displayed in the ways in which women's bodies were exhibited.

## 2.4 Identity in Language and Literacy Education

The analysis of advertisements can share similar objectives with critical literacy and media education. The aims of media education and critical literacy are similar in that they are both concerned with how messages are put together, by whom and in whose interests (Prinsloo, 1999). Lankshear (1997) discusses the complexities involved in defining critical literacy. He outlines the following precepts of a critical literacy approach:

- knowing literacy in general, or particular literacies, critically; that is, having a critical perspective on *literacy* or *literacies per se*;
- having a critical perspective on particular *texts*;
- having a critical perspective on – i.e. being able to make 'critical readings' of – wider *social practices, arrangements, relations, allocations, procedures*, etc., which are mediated by, made possible, and partially sustained through reading, writing, viewing, transmitting, etc., texts. (Lankshear, 1997: 44)

A principle of critical literacy is that texts are not viewed as innocent purveyors of truths, but as selected versions of discourses operating within complex production and reception processes (Fairclough, 1992). It is through discourses, including those in the media, that individual and group identities are constructed and evolve. In this view, as has been discussed above (Hall, 1992, 1996), identity is a social construction that is influenced by historical, geographical and cultural discursive shifts. This is an important element in considering the role the media plays in the lives of learners, not necessarily as biased or manipulative, but rather as constructing and privileging particular kinds of self-identities. This relates to the notion of discursive constructions of identities (Giddens, 1999; Hall, 1992).

Critical literacy is informed by critical pedagogy in the language classroom. Critical pedagogy emphasizes the validity and richness of student's out-of-school cultures, (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). One of the aims of critical pedagogy is to apply critical literacy to popular culture texts. For example, Norton and Vanderheyden (2004: 217) examine comic book culture and second language learning with immigrant adult women in Canada. Like the comics, advertisements are a product of popular culture. Morrel (2002) claims that 'popular culture can help students deconstruct dominant narratives and contend with oppressive practices in hopes of achieving a more egalitarian and inclusive society'. This view of the critical teaching of popular culture claims that popular texts can be used for the analysis of social ideology, especially negative ideology. Such texts are found in music, film, mass-media artifacts, language, customs, and values. Morrell (2002) argues that for a critical educator, popular culture gives a connection between lived experiences and the school culture for urban youth. He states that:

Any pedagogy of popular culture has to be a critical pedagogy where students and teachers learn from and with one another while engaging in authentic dialogue that is centred on the experiences of urban youth as participants in and creators of popular culture (Morrell, 2002).

This notion is informed by the work of scholars such as Freire (1970), Giroux (1997) Hooks (1994) and McLaren (1989), according to Morrel (2002). Popular culture is usually examined in cultural studies. Giroux (2005:2) discusses the role of cultural studies in informing a youth pedagogy. He believes that the field of cultural studies is interested in interdisciplinary issues, such as textuality and representation refracted through the dynamics of gender, sexuality, subordinate youth, national identity, colonialism, race, ethnicity, and popular culture. Giroux (2005) argues that there has been resistance from educators and curriculum designers towards incorporating ideas from cultural studies into the curriculum, for reasons such as administrative issues (e.g. staff training), and assimilating differences among students, which is seen as more significant than treating students as bearers of diverse social memories with a right to speak and represent themselves in the quest for learning and self-determination.



Another form of resistance to the study of popular culture in the classroom comes from students. Buckingham warns of the possibility of youth resistance to critical analysis of popular texts because these are texts that give them pleasure. This is particularly true if such teaching is perceived to be grounded in ignorance about popular culture, or if the study of the media is being used as a covert means of gaining students' assent to positions that are seen to be 'politically correct' (Buckingham, 1998: 11).

Students' resistance to critical literacy is also discussed by McKinney (2004). She describes the challenge to critical pedagogy as being found in the problem of 'student resistance or opposition to critical teaching, that is to the knowledge and identities which are constructed, and possibly imposed in the classroom' (McKinney, 2004:64). Janks (2002) provides somewhat of a solution to students' resistance by arguing that critical literacy should not only aim for rational deconstruction of texts but should also address issues of pleasure and enjoyment because students have different investments in the media texts. Janks (2002) relates an example where students were deconstructing print advertisements, critically analyzing sexist representations of women. She writes that while the female students were able to produce critical deconstructions of the texts, this did not prevent them from desiring to be like the female models represented as sexual objects in the advertisements. Janks argues that 'where identification promises the fulfilment of desire, reason cannot compete' (Janks, 2002:10). Janks calls for critical pedagogy to take into account students' investments, pleasure and jokes, in the critical literacy classroom. She criticizes the 'obsession' with 'reason' in critical pedagogy. In addition, Misson (1994: 20) argues that advertising largely works affectively not logically. He states that even if illogicality is shown, the emotional investment in something does not necessarily disappear.

While problems in critical pedagogy or critical literacy remain unresolved, for this study, I want to agree with McKinney (2004:66) that:

It is thus crucial for those working in critical literacy to take student identity seriously, considering what their students' investments might be and how they are positioned by the texts under study.

Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994:5) state that literacy is an inherently social and cultural process and, as historical and cross-cultural studies have shown, forms of literacy are inevitably plural and diverse. These authors argue that English teachers should be concerned with the whole range of cultural products, from Shakespearean plays to hamburger advertisements. Their approach to audience research looks at how young people actively establish and articulate their own tastes and preferences, the different ways in which they interpret what they read and watch and listen to (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994:10). Significant for my study is the position Buckingham and Sefton-Green take that data must be read as a form of social action that needs to be related to the social context in which it is produced. They argue that:

From this perspective, what students say about popular culture, and the texts they produce, are part of the process by which they construct their own social identities (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994:10).

Dolby (1999:296) asserts that 'popular culture, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a key site for the formation of identities, for the ways in which we make sense of the world, and locate ourselves in it'. This necessitates caution in how one critically analyzes popular culture texts with students. Misson (1994) warns against criticising texts for exploitativeness, sexism, reliance on stereotypes and so on. He writes that this approach is robbing the students of investigating what the texts are doing, how they are doing it, and of understanding textual strategies.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the Critical Discourse Analysis framework that I am going to use in analyzing the print advertisements. I have also engaged with the notion of identity through considering traditional/essentialist notions of identity and anti-essentialist/post-structuralist understandings of identity. My study draws on the latter approach, and posits identity as being fluid, non-fixed, changing and plural. I have also shown the importance of brands and consumption in youth identities in South Africa. I have discussed the role of identity within advertising and linked this to audience research and popular culture. Finally, I have considered the value of media texts in critical literacy, critical pedagogy and cultural studies. The next chapter describes the type of textual analysis and audience research that I employed for this study.